



# Elsah History

No. 113

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## **Elsah Mural Revisited**



The McNair House, an early Elsie brick structure built by Thomas McNair, has in its stair hall an Elsie mural. In 1973, Glenn Felch painted the mural as a commission from Charles B. and Jeralyn Hosmer. Felch did extensive research on Elsie and its people and wove into his mural a beautiful montage of 19th century Elsie buildings and people. In 1992, *Elsah History no. 61* featured an interview with Charles B. Hosmer and Glenn Felch about the mural's history and importance as well as beautiful grayscale photographs by photographer Robert Graul. Visitors, including our annual holiday house tour guests, find the McNair House and the mural a "must see."

*A new reissue of Elsie History no. 61*

Elsah History no. 61 has been copied many times to provide accurate information about the mural. Recently, Historic Elsie Foundation has felt the need to document not only the mural, but also the mural's colors that are still vibrant after 45 years. Enclosed with this *Elsah History no. 113* is a reissue of *Elsah History no. 61*, with color photographs by Erica Popp. Andrew Blass provided technical

reproduction assistance using the original layout to the extent possible. HEF is grateful for their professional services.

Erica Popp is a working artist and owner of Erica Popp Studios + Gallery in the St. Louis Tower Grove South neighborhood. She has taught at St. Louis Community College. She holds an MFA in Fine Arts from Fontbonne University in St. Louis and a BA in Studio Art from Principia College.

Andrew Blass is a front-end web developer. He has a BA from Principia College. He has done layout for Historic Elsah Foundation outside his regular work.

### *A Retrospective Exhibit of Glenn Felch*

This summer Principia College will have a retrospective exhibit of Glenn Felch's work in Voney Art Center, the James Schmidt Gallery, late May to mid-September. Judith Felch is curator of the exhibit. She is Glenn Felch's widow and an artist in her own right. She will give a lecture on Glenn Felch, his work and approach to his art.

### **Elsah – In and Around** ***Strategic Plan and Landmarks*** ***Illinois grant for the Mott Building***

The Village of Elsah has been working on a strategic plan for a few years. As part of that plan, they held public meetings and did a survey. Using the response to the survey, in

order to promote the possibility of a restaurant in the Mott building, the Village repealed an 1893 ordinance prohibiting the sale of alcoholic beverages in public places. Elsah is no longer "dry." You can see more details at their website:  
[www.escapetoelsah.com](http://www.escapetoelsah.com)

In our last issue, we reported the Village's purchase and painting of the Mott Building. The Village also applied for and received a \$3,000 grant to work on the foundation of the building from Landmarks Illinois. Historic Elsah Foundation sent a letter of support for this worthy project. Additional maintenance is planned, but so far the building has not been rented or purchased.

With the goal of economic development, the Village is improving sidewalks and walkways to make Elsah a more pedestrian-friendly location. In a much appreciated presentation and dialogue, Mike Pitchford, Village Mayor, shared the current year's plan and future anticipated changes with the Historic Elsah Foundation Board.

### ***Ice House Sign***



Historic Elsah Foundation received as a donation the ice house ruin located at 2 Mill Street. In the last few years, we stabilized it for safety (see *Elsah History no. 104*). Elsah visitors love seeing it and want to know more about it. Now we have this lovely sign to explain what the building was and why it is important.

However, this was not a quick and easy project. It turned out to be a much larger and more complicated project than expected. Terri Cronin Darr, Historic Elsah Foundation board member, led the project. She researched various materials and techniques, and donated time for an employee of her firm to design the layout of the sign, including a drawing of the Ice House as we believe it looked when first built as a residence.

With the approval of Village of Elsah Zoning Board the sign is now installed. We thank Terri for her leadership and tireless efforts to provide this professional and informative sign.

### ***McNair tool chest***



Refinished McNair tool chest

Even though there are few descendants of 19<sup>th</sup> century Elsah families located in the Elsah valley, we do hear from their descendants. In 2011, we were visited by some McNair descendants, including Marcia Stoddard, great-great-great granddaughter of Thomas McNair (1803-1881).



Six years earlier, Historic Elsah Foundation heard from McNair family friends Edward and Shirley B. Weber, Sr. of East Peoria Illinois. Their visit is covered in *Elsah History no. 90* (2005). The Webers had a McNair tool chest in their basement since 1934, where Beulah McNair Carpenter left it when she moved to California. Virginia, Weber's mother, was a good friend of Beulah.

The Village of Elsah Museum was offered the chest, but it was too large for the Museum to accept. We recommended to the McNair descendants that they contact the family and get the chest.

Recently, Marcia Stoddard, great-great-great granddaughter of Thomas



McNair (1803- 1881) sent us images of the tool chest to show what happened to it. Marcia Stoddard's husband, Jim Stoddard, picked up the chest using four sturdy helpers. More recently, the Stoddard's son-in-law, Cory Crowley, took up the challenge of the chest by refinishing it, creating an amazing transformation. It is now worthy of a place of honor in their family room. It is filled with tools of various eras, many from long ago. Some may well have been used by Thomas McNair.

Here is the chest when it first arrived. It was a true handmade chest for tools (dimensions: 29 inches tall, 29 inches deep, 44 inches wide). It could have been built by Thomas or certainly his sons, William and Robert.



Cory Crowley removed the green paint and made it a show stopper chest.



Refinished chest filled with tools

### ***Elsah General Store***

For over three years, Elsah has benefited from having a general store. The business has continued to grow both with local residents and visitors. One of the store's special items is a wide variety of bottled soda, some old fashioned flavor as Green River and unique flavors such as Brownie chocolate soda.

There is a Best of St. Louis table with bread, pastries and chocolate. Individual servings are available, as is coffee. Many locals find the store's convenience a reason to stop there every week.

### ***Eliestoun Red Maple***

One of the largest and oldest Japanese maple trees in St. Louis Missouri area is located on the property known as Eliestoun. In order to survive, the tree has needed important trimming and support for some of its large branches. This landscape preservation project is

shown at this url:

[friendsofeliestoun.org/tree](http://friendsofeliestoun.org/tree). Ben Chu (Missouri Botanical Garden) installed the supports. He said that maple trees in Japan can be centuries old.

Friends of Eliestoun is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to the preservation of Eliestoun House and the immediate surrounding landscape. While the property is located on the Principia College campus, Friends of Eliestoun is a separate organization and all its work is funded with donations.

Henry S. Turner, Jr. and his wife, Ada Ames Turner, built Eliestoun in 1889. Alexander Wadsworth Longfellow, a Boston architect, designed the building. J. Wilkinson Elliott, a Pittsburgh landscape architect and seller of retail plants, designed the landscape plan for the grounds around the house. In Elliott's 1902 book, A Plea for Hardy Plants, he describes the plan for Eliestoun as a "Plan for Grounds of Twenty Acres."

We thank Friends of Eliestoun and their donors for their work, that made saving this important landscape feature possible.

## HEF News

### *Keller Trust*

With the death of Genie Keller, the Keller Trust has made a distribution to a number of community organizations. Historic Elsie Foundation is one of them. We are

pleased and grateful for this recognition and the support it provides for our organization. The Keller family has been an integral part of Elsie since their arrival in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. We hope that our current generation of families will continue to extend their support and leave their good mark on the community far into the future.

### *Home for the Holidays Celebration*



Last year's annual "Home for the Holidays" attendance and revenue increased. As usual, Blair Smith and his committee have done a great job in arrangements and printed materials. Jon Hosmer produced a beautiful pamphlet on the houses included in the tour. A common statement from many of our guests and volunteers was "it is such a happy event."

This year there was a special showing of Elsie Artworks by Glenn Felch in the Mott Building gallery space. Historic Elsie Foundation has been the gallery representative for Elsie Artworks. As a result of the warm 62 degree weather on the first Saturday in December, the door to the gallery was open and made the whole exhibit very approachable. As a result

of this exhibit, three more Glenn Felch Elsay Artworks were sold. We thank the Village of Elsay for this opportunity to use a portion of the Mott Building during the building's recent restoration. A new coat of paint on the building is handsome and added to the good vibes at the exhibit.

*Photograph by Kim Howland, used with permission*

### ***Farley Music Hall***

Historic Elsay Foundation's building, Farley Music Hall, has developed problems with its siding. A number of boards installed during the restoration in 1994 have not held up as well as the older, old growth white pine boards that survived the 1993 Flood. Some of the new boards have soft spots indicating rot. So, we are again going to have to repair some of the siding. We are considering various options including more durable wood species than yellow pine, new treated wood, engineered fiber cement board and old salvaged wood. We have consulted with experts and are still developing a plan. We will keep you posted on our progress and hope you will consider a special donation to this project.

On the good news side, Farley Music Hall rentals have more than doubled in the past two years, thanks to the efforts of our scheduler, Connie Davis, the owner of the Green Tree Inn. HEF thanks Connie for her work and enthusiasm. We find out of town visitors are amazed and have a lot of

questions about our wonderful building. We are grateful to be reminded that we have a treasure, not just a structure for our activities.

### ***Marie Oleson Remembered with Gratitude***

By Jane Pfeifer

March 12, 2018

Marie Oleson, resident of Elsay Hills, passed away in early March. Her daughter, Elizabeth Oleson, had been caring for her at home.



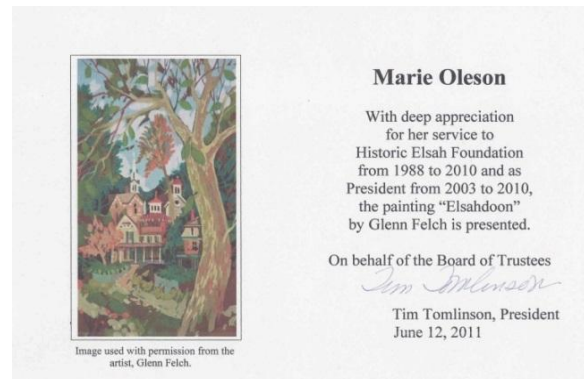
Many in Elsay knew Marie for her active work for Historic Elsay Foundation as Secretary and then President. She was also editor of the *Elsah History* newsletter. She could do by herself many jobs that it now takes several people to accomplish in twice the time. She was passionate, caring, and loving.

She worked at Principia College as an administrative assistant. Her last position was in the Music Department. Prior to that, she worked for the Dean of Faculty. She was greatly valued for the quality of her work and the love she expressed. She will be greatly missed by all who knew her.

Marie's immediate family, Elizabeth Oleson, Karen Treadwell and Karen's husband, Dan Treadwell, and their twin boys, Asher and Eli, had frequent visits and emails. In addition, Marie had many extended family members with whom she kept in contact and visited her, including a cousin in early March. She had friends around the United States and the world, especially in Norway. Marie's husband, W. L. "Ole" Oleson, was a pilot for World Wide, Slick and

TWA airlines. Ole worked at TWA for 30 years. Marie was formerly a stewardess at World Wide where she and Ole met. They had a "gold pass" to travel and used it frequently for many years. Ole passed on 3 years ago.

Those wishing to send a donation in Marie Oleson's memory and honor might consider sending a donation to Historic Elsie Foundation or The Principia, two institutions that she loved.



## **The Village of Elsie Museum Photography Exhibit 2018**

The Village of Elsie announced the winners of the annual Village of Elsie Museum Photography Exhibit. The purpose of the exhibit is to celebrate and foster an appreciation of the beauty and unique qualities of the Village. This year's theme is "My Favorite Door." The winners are Robert Erxleben of Salem, Illinois and Marty McKay of Alton, Illinois. The opening reception for the exhibit is Saturday, April 7, from 1 to 4 pm at

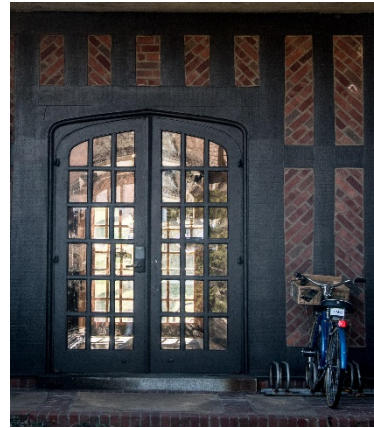
the Museum, located in the Village Hall building, 26 LaSalle, Elsie, Illinois.

Erica Popp was the judge for the two purchase prizes that are awarded based on location. The Village of Elsie prize was for a photograph taken in the valley, and the Greatriverroad.com prize was for a photograph taken in the surrounding area. In addition, Green Tree Inn awards the winner of the Village of Elsie prize with an overnight stay at the inn.





The Village of Elsah purchase prize is awarded to Robert Erxleben of Salem, Illinois for his work titled, "Home Sweet Home." The work is a digital image, 13 X 13 inch print, framed and matted to 18 X 18 inches. The judge said that the composition was excellent and the muted colors showed off the blue door and red roof. The image has a charming feel that characterizes an Elsah home right now, but is still a celebration of the past. The square print size provides a contemporary touch.



The Greatriverroad.com purchase prize is awarded to Marty McKay of Alton, Illinois. The judge said that the composition is beautiful, slightly off center and a nice celebration of the architecture of Bernard Maybeck. The light and the reflections in the glass of the doors provide a mystery about the interior and extra dimensions to the doors on other side of the hall. Maybeck designed his architecture as an integral part of the students' education. The interior light inside the hall hints at his expectation regarding the intellectual light of those dwelling in his buildings. The print has good color and is well printed.

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*"Elsahdoon" image on page 7 used with permission from Judith Felch, representative for the works of Glenn Felch*

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